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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004786

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STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2015

TAGS: [PGOV TW](#)

SUBJECT: PRE-ELECTION SCENE SETTER: TAOYUAN COUNTY, KMT
CONFIDENT DESPITE RECENT CONTROVERSY

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Incumbent Kuomintang (KMT) Taoyuan County Magistrate Eric Chu (Li-lun) continues to coast toward reelection in Taoyuan despite the publicity given to a controversial, politically motivated "extraordinary video" that accuses Chu of official and personal misconduct. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) denies any link to the video but nonetheless offered a copy to AIT. DPP candidate Cheng Pao-ching staged two protests after being summoned to testify as a witness in the video disc probe, apparently hoping to gain sympathy votes. The KMT is justifiably confident that Chu, who tied for the highest approval ratings of all city mayors and county magistrates in Taiwan in a recent poll, will win handily in what is widely considered a safe "Blue" district. End Summary.

KMT: The Confident Incumbent

[12.](#) (C) KMT Taoyuan County Chairman Fu Chung-hsiung told AIT that approximately 60 percent of Taoyuan voters support the Pan-Blue camp, adding that in the last presidential and magistrate elections, the Pan-Blue camp garnered 10 percent more votes than the Pan-Green camp. According to Fu, 90 percent of Taoyuan's Mainlander and Hakka voters (who account for 49 percent of the general population) and 50 percent of Taiwanese voters are Pan-Blue supporters. Fu also estimated that the voter turnout rate will be 65 percent and suggested that a high voter turnout rate will benefit incumbent KMT Magistrate Chu Li-lun and the KMT. Acknowledging that DPP supporters are historically more enthusiastic about casting their ballots than KMT supporters, Fu criticized the DPP for creating conflicts or other "incidents" to target the sympathy vote and unite their supporters.

[13.](#) (C) Fu attributed Magistrate Chu's commanding lead in the polls to his strong performance in office. Fu told AIT that Chu promoted several development projects, has made strenuous efforts to keep businesses in Taoyuan and has encouraged investment. As a result, Fu claimed, Taoyuan's tax revenues are higher than any other city or county in Taiwan and the unemployment rate has dropped from 5 to 3 percent. Fu told AIT that despite the recent negative campaigning, which he said is common in Taiwan, voters are most concerned with candidates' qualifications and their development plans for the county. Fu was confident that the "extraordinary video" will not impact Chu's campaign and he suggested most voters are aware of the political motive behind the disc. Fu noted that KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou has made three visits to Taoyuan but will not be making any additional appearances since the KMT views Taoyuan as a safe district.

DPP: On the Attack

[14.](#) (C) DPP Taoyuan County Advisory Committee Chairman Hu Tsung-wen criticized Magistrate Eric Chu's social welfare

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policies, especially for breaking his promise to increase subsidies for the elderly. In response, Hu said, DPP candidate Cheng Pao-ching has promised to increase senior citizens' pensions and also provide free lunches for primary school children. Hu also accused Chu of unfair treatment of Taiwanese military veterans, saying Mainlander military veterans receive a monthly pension while native Taiwanese do not receive a subsidy. Finally, Hu criticized Magistrate Chu for living with his family in Taipei City rather than Taoyuan, and he suggested that Chu is more concerned about running for Taipei City Mayor and helping large companies profit than helping the residents of Taoyuan County.

[15.](#) (C) Chairman Hu insisted that Lin I-fang, the producer of the "extraordinary video," has no connection to the DPP or Cheng Pao-ching. DPP candidate Cheng, angry at being summoned for questioning about the video, staged his second hunger strike the same morning AIT visited Taoyuan, garnering sympathy from elderly Taiwanese voters. Hu told AIT that even though the DPP is not behind the "extraordinary video," the party does agree with some of its accusations against Magistrate Chu Li-lun and without being asked, Hu provided AIT with a copy of the disc.

Comment

16. (C) This is one of the easiest races to call. Chu has received strong popular support throughout the campaign. His DPP opponent is not one of the rising stars that the ruling party put in some of the more competitive races against KMT incumbents. Chu has told AIT that he is committed to serving out his term if reelected. He then hopes to move to a major cabinet position. End comment.
Paal